1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

463 products of specialized labor are open and visible to everyone, and in some measure they are part of the lore which each man learns. Not all the men come to practice them, but they have all seen them or heard them described, and they are part of the fund of conversation, precedent, and value which is common coin among the people of the community. One's special craft does not segregate one from one's neighbors or take one outside the community here. Rather it is one's mark or sign, one's reputation and status within it.

This is the case particularly where, as here, most of the craftsmen of one sort or another have always depended upon a plot of land or a kitchen garden behind their cabins, with perhaps a pig or a cow or two, nearly as much as they depended upon their craft. By this dependence they were never segregated from the rest of the local population, either physically or occupationally. They too were agriculturalists of a sort and shared farmers' tribulations. Just as the farmers knew something of their techniques, so the local craftsmen were nearly always proficient in the ways of agriculture. Today in rural Clare the handy man may be anything from a veterinarian or bonesetter to a building contractor. He is always without benefit of law, apprenticeship, or formal training, and merely follows a technique of which everyone knows something. The farmers are ready to pass upon his skill, to debate the technical points of his work, to build up or tear down his reputation.

463 467 874 Down to the time of the World War, in the last generation, the close acquaintance the small farmers had with the special skills of the countryside was reinforced by the interest the farmers had in putting their sons to a trade. They could often find a place for them thus. In the towns even today formal apprenticeships, into which the farmer must pay for his son to enter, still flourish.

The statements one can get about the local specialists,

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

 463

at least of those of the better recognized trades, are direct 467 ●
and intimate. The following words illustrate something of 874
the character of apprenticeship. A small farmer is speaking
of his own knowledge of local conditions:

Before the war there used to be about twenty shoemakers in 463
the neighborhood, but now they've mostly gone away or are in 467
the towns. One of them went into Ennistymon. Whenever a 874
farmer wants a strong pair of boots even yet, he will not go to 294
a shop but he would go to the shoemaker. It wasn't always the
case the son of a shoemaker would follow the trade because
there was good money in it. With it they would buy a farm
and so for his sons, and they would go to farming. If a farmer
had a crippled son, he might send him to the shoemaker to
teach him the trade. Papers were signed that bound the boy
for three years to the tradesman, and then the boy would go
live with the shoemaker. At first he would be taught to tap,
then to stick, then to sew, and the last thing would be to cut.
If a boy left before the three years were up, no one would give
him a job, and no other tradesman would take him on to teach
him a trade. The father had to give twenty pounds to twenty-
five pounds to teach him. At the end of three years the boy
was given his indenture papers which meant he could set him-
self up any place in the country or, if he had not enough money
to do that, he would work as a journeyman for someone else
and his papers would give him the right to do it.

There were a great many tailors and smiths too. The time
of work was three years. A boy who was a cripple might be
sent to tailoring. He was taught three years and then he could
set himself up. It was the easiest of them all to get along with
because it required no money to start with. In the old days the
tailor used to come to the house and stay for a week or so and
make clothes for all the men of the house and go to the next
house after.

The smiths trained boys also. When I was small, a cousin of 463
mine had a forge below on the road and any wet day all the 874
boys used to gather there and watch and talk. I started out by 326
blowing the bellows and then doing other things until finally
I was as good as anyone. If I had the material I could make
shoes, and I always shoe my own horses.

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

is created. A pathway is created along which human lives can move and play out their roles in social life. One of the farmer's sons can hope, with luck and affluence, to become a shop-assistant in the market-town. The portion he receives upon the dispersal of the farm family may well take the form of such a start in life. The farmer-father pays the boy's apprentice bond.

Formal apprenticeships still flourish in Irish country towns and nowhere better than in the shop or pub. The country boy is bound in custom and in law to his new employer and learns the alien way of business and social habit under a master's eye. Eventually he may succeed to a shop of his own, but first he 'must serve his time'. In this, rural Ireland has preserved an older form and charged it with its own peculiar content. The town-bred lad is seldom hired; he brings no rural kindred with him. Then, too, he is neither so impressionable nor so easy to control. The country lad, at first, is both. The shopkeeper taps the social order of the countryside in the person of his fledgling 'prentice boy.

But time brings ordered change in social life, in the town no less than in the countryside. The boy grows up; he serves his time. He acquires the experience and the technique which fit him for the role for which his parents paid his apprentice bond. Unless he is to retain a subordinate and unimportant place as shop-assistant for a lifetime, he must move on. He must acquire a shop himself.